

OPPOSITION TO SOVIET SCHEMES

British. But as long as tribal structure was preserved, these developments did not seriously affect the tribes and the areas under their control. This was especially obvious in the southern tribes. The British traditionally kept an eye on the tribes on the Iranian and Arab sides of the Persian Gulf. British diplomacy in this region radiated from the Residency in Bushire.

The region to which the British traditionally gave most of their attention was Khuzistan, a province inhabited largely by Arab tribes and the area of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's concession. At the time when the concession was established it was unthinkable to do anything in the area without the knowledge and approval of the Sheikh; Khazal of Mohammerah. It was also necessary to keep friendly touch with the powerful tribe of Bakhtiari, who, if hostile, were apt to endanger the security of oil installation. The pro-German attitude of some Bakhtiari chiefs during World War I resulted in the puncturing of a number of pipe lines and taught the British a lesson. It impressed upon them the necessity of exercising a skill in their relations with the tribes. To cope with this situation the British arranged with the Bakhtiari to grant their chiefs a regular subsidy amounting to 3 per cent of the Anglo-Iranian's income. This was intended to eliminate Bakhtiari mischief and to make them the guardians rather than saboteurs of the pipe lines. The policy toward the Sheikh of Mohammerah was that of supporting him whenever he wanted to assert his autonomy both vis-a-vis Iran and, later, Iraq. The advent of Reza Shah spoiled this mutually profitable arrangement, and because of the ruthless centralizing policy of the Shah,

Sheikh Khazal was obliged to flee Iran. He was given sanctuary in British-controlled Iraq. He never ceased to dream about his return and the future autonomy of his area. We shall see him reappear on the political scene of Iran in the winter of 1945-1946.

The support extended to Khazal was often criticized as an example of British perfidy and basic insincerity toward the Iranian government. Soviet sources were especially outspoken in this respect. The accusation as formulated was that, while pretending to defend the independence of Iran and to support the authority of its central government, the British were really sapping the very foundations of the Iranian state by promoting tribal identity. Such an accusation